

nationally inclusive constitution, that is conducting what looks like a show trial, borrowing noxious elements of Baathist law to speed the way toward an early and politically popular execution.

THE OCCUPIERS' TRIAL

(By Pepe Escobar)

Occupied Iraq has virtually no security, electricity, water or jobs. Last Saturday, instead of basic necessities for a decent life, Iraqis had a referendum—already suspected of massive fraud—on a constitution few have even seen.

Starting on Wednesday, Iraqis, and the rest of the world for that matter, get a running soap opera—the trial of Saddam Hussein, under whose regime, for all its terror, and then 12 years of economic sanctions, Iraqis at least had security, electricity, water and jobs.

This “trial of the century”—or at least the early 21st century—starts at a secret Green Zone location, by an anonymous court, and under extreme, U.S. military-imposed security measures. It's a made in U.S.A. affair—in administrative and financial terms.

The court, the training and the whole proceedings cost U.S. \$75 million—courtesy of U.S. taxpayers (the budget was allocated in May 2004). About 300 people—paid by the Americans—work on the trial machinery. The five “secret” Iraqi judges—Shi'ites and Kurds, no Sunnis—are paid by the Americans, live inside the Green Zone and are protected by the Americans from, being kidnapped or killed.

They have received special training from U.S., British and Australian legal experts and have even staged a mock trial in London. They are supposed to be “independent” in a country on which “the United States continues to wield vast influence”, according to the understated Associated Press. Human Rights Watch has warned on the record that the trial may be “violating international standards for fair trials”.

The initial charges against Saddam will focus on the killing of 143 Shi'ites in the village Dujail, north of Baghdad, in 1982, after an assassination attempt against him. Recently disclosed images from Iraqi TV at the time show Saddam touring Dujail in triumph—but not the hostility of the crowd.

The assassination attempt was claimed by the Shi'ite Da'wa Party. Current Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari happens to be a leader of the Da'wa Party. As far as he's concerned, Saddam should be pronounced guilty in no time. “We are not trying to land on the moon here . . . It's enough [to try Saddam] on Dujail and Anfal. The tribunal is just and open, he has a defense lawyer and the verdict will match the crime . . . I don't want to intervene in judicial proceedings, but why do we say now that more time is needed?”

Six other people are being tried alongside Saddam. They include his half-brother Barzan al-Tikriti—who was the head of the terror-inflicting Mukhabarat intelligence services; his notorious henchman Taha Yassin Ramadan; Awad Hamed al-Bander, the judge who sentenced many in Dujail to death; and four Ba'ath Party officials. The prosecution charges that Saddam himself, as head of state, certified the executions pronounced by an Iraqi special tribunal presided by Bander.

This won't be an American-style courtroom drama. There's no jury. The chief judge will question a number of witnesses. Many have already been interviewed before the trial. The five judges decide whether Saddam and his six co-defendants are innocent or guilty. Saddam will have the right to call witnesses.

If he is convicted, his defense team will be able to file a number of appeals before the

sentence—expected to be death—is applied. If it's death row, Saddam must be executed—in fact hanged—within 30 days of the ruling on his last appeal. The description of the trial procedures is provided, once again, not by Iraqis, but by Americans—at the National Security Council and the State Department.

This special Iraqi tribunal was instituted by former American proconsul Paul Bremer in December 2003—curiously only three days before Saddam, according to the official Pentagon version, was captured in his hole on the ground. The tribunal is supposed to judge crimes committed by Iraqis—inside and outside the country—between July 17, 1968 (when the Ba'ath Party took power) and May 1, 2003, as well as war crimes perpetrated during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) and the invasion of Kuwait (1990–1991).

So a string of trials may be in the offing—concerning, for starters, the Anfal campaign of 1987–1988 which killed at least 5,000 Kurds, the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the suppression of the Shi'ite uprising of 1991 (which may have killed 200,000 people) and the widespread assassination of Shi'ite religious leaders, like the Grand Ayatollah Baqr al-Sadr.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MARCHANT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARCHANT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

□ 1700

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO COAST GUARD IN EFFORTS DURING HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary efforts of our Coast Guard in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Coast Guard again demonstrated just how well they live up to their Latin motto, which means: “Always Ready.”

Several days before Katrina made landfall, the Coast Guard activated emergency response plans, while maintaining communications with both the Atlantic and Pacific commands and headquarters in Washington. As the disaster drew near, if something did

not work, the Coast Guard modified its plans to meet the needs.

The first images we as Americans saw on television depicting this disaster were those of Coast Guard helicopters rescuing stranded citizens from rooftops amid rising flood waters. In the face of high winds and flying debris, daytime temperatures nearing 100 degrees and downed utility lines, our brave men and women heeded the call of duty to perform selfless acts of courage.

During around-the-clock flight operations over a 7-day period, our Coast Guard helicopters operating over New Orleans saved an astonishing 6,470 lives. They also helped to save thousands of other victims by delivering tons of food and water to those who could not be evacuated immediately. In all, the Coast Guard rescued 33,500 people in its response to Katrina, six times the number of people it rescued in all of 2004.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of the Coast Guard air crew rescue swimmers, many of whom trained at the Coast Guard Aquatic Training Facility, located in my congressional district at the Coast Guard station in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The Coast Guard rescue swimmers faced some very adverse conditions, including flooded houses and buildings, steep slippery roofs, foul and contaminated water, and the need to hack through attics with axes or break out windows to free the survivors. Despite these obstacles, these brave men and women saved many American lives.

The Coast Guard's responses to Katrina and Rita should serve as a model for our governmental agencies and our first responders in the face of future disasters. These brave men and women succeeded in keeping these devastating events from becoming even greater tragedies. I thank the Coast Guard for their dedicated service, and I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating them and supporting my future efforts to upgrade their training facility in my congressional district.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STUPAK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RYAN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, Catholics have a sacrament, the sacrament of penance, which they call reconciliation. It is a time when you revisit your own life to take a close look at how your daily actions square with what you believe. As a Catholic, looking at this budget, I cannot square the moral values of our country, opportunity, equality and justice, with the practical impact that this budget proposal will have on the lives of working American families.

This year, thanks to President Bush's tax-cutting program, the U.S. Government will deliver up to \$106 billion to the multiple bank accounts of some of the wealthiest Americans. This government program to help wealthy Americans spend more money now forces a false crunch on our resources, a \$50 billion cut that Republicans believe should come from Medicaid, food stamps, and student loans. Who will feel the impact of these cuts? Well, almost 60 percent of all people in nursing homes who are on Medicaid, and one-third of all babies who are born on Medicaid, and 8 million Americans with disabilities who depend on Medicaid, and 36 million Americans who have to worry about going hungry.

How do we, as a Congress, reconcile the fact that these cuts will disproportionately affect low-income Americans, the elderly, and the poor? The answer is we should not reconcile ourselves to such an action, not for 1 minute, not for a nanosecond. If we are going to dramatically change for the worse the lives of millions of children and families and senior citizens across the country, it had better be because we had to, not because we chose to. And there is no doubt that Republicans have now chosen to rob the poor to maintain and create new tax breaks for the rich.

We are not simply robbing the poor of resources. The proposed cuts are robbing the poor of opportunity. The reconciliation budget targets programs that work to bridge the gap between rich and poor, Medicaid, food stamps, and student loans, that strive to even the playing field for all American families.

Eight weeks ago, across the United States, Americans saw the faces of other Americans staring up at them from television screens scratching out desperate signs on rooftops. Help us, the signs said. Grandmothers, brothers, nieces, nephews, newborns, the faces of families who could be our families, neighbors who could be our neighbors, but desperate, alone, and calling out to the world to see. Across the country, Americans answered with one voice: we are better than this. This is wrong. This is immoral. This must not be allowed to continue. We must take care of our own. It is our responsibility. It is our duty. It is who we are as a people.

As a country, we saw that 100,000 people were trapped in New Orleans because they did not have automobiles to escape the flood waters. We found that 50 percent of all children in Louisiana

live in poverty. In response to this national revelation, Republicans have revisited our national budget and made a decision to cut programs from the poorest of the poor while protecting a new tax cut giveaway to the richest of the rich. Instead of limiting these tax cuts to millionaires, the Republicans have decided to rebuild New Orleans on the backs of the poorest people from the rest of the country.

This is a moral question, not a budget matter. The Republicans are building the high levees around their threatened tax cuts, while letting the flood swamp the programs that matter for the rest of Americans. This is what the debate is really all about. It is about our values as a Nation and how they are reflected in how we govern, how America should treat its neighbors, our fellow Americans, who by an accident of birth came into this world unable to see or who were born into a family without the means to put food on the table, or who had the misfortune to develop Alzheimer's. Should we let them starve? Should we tell their children they will never go to college because their parents cannot pay the tuition? Shall we turn them away from the hospitals because they cannot afford the care and do not have the insurance? Or should we as a country decide that in this land of plenty no one should go without basic human dignity?

As a Catholic, I was brought up to believe that character is judged by how we treat the least amongst us. This budget does not pass that test, and my hope is that tomorrow we as a Congress will rise up to defeat it.

Poverty is on the rise in our country, 37 million Americans are now in poverty.

A family of two in poverty—a single mother with her child—is living on \$1,069 a month.

About 14 million Americans are living on half of poverty. A single mother with her child living at half of poverty is trying to survive on \$535 a month.

That is two people living on \$123.37 a week.

And each day in America 2,385 more babies are born into poverty.

The Republicans will say that society has little obligation to help the poor because they fail to take personal responsibility for their lives.

The United States has highest GDP in the world. We are first in military technology; first in military exports; first in Gross Domestic Product; first in the number of millionaires and billionaires; and first in health technology. But we rank 12th in living standards among our poorest one-fifth; 13th in the gap between rich and poor; 14th in efforts to lift children out of poverty; 18th in the percent of children in poverty; and 37th in the health status of our citizens.

We should be working to close these gaps and ensure that all Americans have a fair chance at life and are treated with basic human dignity.

Instead, this reconciliation plan will take away food, health care, education and the ability to live in dignity in old age from people who have no other options. This budget will proliferate existing inequalities.

I simply cannot reconcile this budget with my values because this budget does not reflect who we are as a nation and what we believe our responsibility is to other Americans.

We will be judged by how we take care of the least of our people.

We will be judged by our decision to turn our backs on those Americans who were driven to cry out HELP—We are your neighbors, your grandmothers, your children.

I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this shortsighted, fiscally irresponsible and immoral budget.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMANN of New York). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MEEHAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. HERSETH addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

REPUBLICANS WORKING HARD TO KEEP DEFICIT SPENDING UNDER CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to listen to people come up and talk and talk and demagogue that, gee, the Republicans are letting the deficit grow so big, when the people that are talking about it keep promoting one giveaway after another giveaway after another giveaway. It seems to some of us that we spend half our time trying to fight off the incredible giveaway and deficit spending of those who are accusing the Republicans of letting the deficit get too big.

You bet, it is too big for me. I do not like it. I do not want to saddle my children with indebtedness, so we are working and fighting to keep some of those who are complaining across the aisle from giving away even more. So thank goodness there are some conservatives who are trying to keep the deficit down. Thank goodness we are making headway. Thank goodness the deficit is going to be \$200 billion less than what was expected. We are making progress.

I cannot apologize for having tax cuts that go to those who pay taxes, because to give tax cuts to those who do not pay taxes is not a tax cut, it is a giveaway, yet another giveaway. After 9/11 we should have had another 1929-type depression, it was that devastating to this country. Yet because we had a President who pushed forward with a tax cut to those who pay taxes, we ended up having a mild recession and came charging back, as we continue to do.